FIGHTING AMERICANS, TOO!

Second Edition

WE BELIEVE in democracy and dedicate ourselves to the furtherance of its principles. To uphold these principles we must destroy every form of tyranny, oppression, and violation of human rights. We place our faith in America and base our hope in the future on that faith.

Therefore, we believe that our volunteering in the armed forces of this country is a step towards the realization of these ends and a positive manifestation of our loyalty to the United States of America.

---Credo of the Volunteers for Victory
Topaz, Utah

"It is hoped that the Japanese American combat team will become one of the outstanding units of the American Army. This combat team will fight with and as a part of a Caucasian force. The War Department has faith in the loyal Japanese Americans. This is a splendid opportunity to demonstrate to the American people and to the War Department that Japanese Americans have faith in America. A success of the program and the voluntary feature of induction will be a great step forward in the rehabilitation plans for Japanese Americans."

—Col. William P. SCOBEY, Executive Officer
Office of the Assist. Sec'ty of War

THE BACKGROUND..

There are living today in ten government-operated relocation centers scattered through the western half of the United States some 100,000 persons of Japanese blood. Barbed wire fences and armed soldier guards are standard accouterments of these centers. About 70,000 of these people are American citizens by right of birth; the rest are aliens.

A year ago, all 100,000 were living on the west coast, most of them long-time residents of that area, with their homes and businesses and interests rooted there. But through a series of circumstances following the Japanese treachery at Pearl Harbor, the American government felt impelled to remove them from the coast and place them under detention at various inland sites.

No single specific factor was responsible for the eviction. The government's action was the result of several cumulative forces and pressures. One was the natural rise in the tide of public feeling against all those of Japanese descent as a result of the Pearl Harbor attack. This feeling was understandably strongest on the Pacific coast where Japanese residents were most numerous. Another factor was the necessity of military precaution against possible sabotage and fifth-column activity by elements in the Japanese population in the event of an attack on the coast. Still another consideration was the possibility of widespread vigilante action by groups of Pacific coast inhabitants against the Japanese. A fourth factor was the pressure exerted by various opportunistic individuals and organizations who, from motives either of racial prejudice or of possible political or economic advantages to be gained, advocated the evacuation.

Taken all together, these factors were felt by the government to be strong enough to justify the evacuation of all persons of Japanese blood as a measure of national expediency.

As a physical fact, the evacuation is past history which cannot be countermanded. But the one crucial issue which emerges from the whole complex of circumstances and events involved in it is as alive and challenging today as at the beginning of evacuation. This is the issue of the loyalty or disloyalty of those evacuated.

The 100,000 evacuees are not in their present situation because they have been proven collectively disloyal to an America at war. No specific charges on this count have ever been brought against them by the government. Nor were the removal and forced detention of the 70,000 who are citizens based on any imputation to them of acts which invalidated their citizenship rights. But because of the stigma inherent in evacuation and, moreover, because of the wholesale nature of the action, embracing all those of Japanese descent, without trial or hearing, without regard to citizenship, the general effect has been to put the whole racial group under a cloud of doubt and suspicion in the eyes of the American public. The loyal many received the same brand as the disloyal few; the sheep became indistinguishable from the goats.

The most continuously disheartening aspect of the whole situation thus was not the physical hardship of dislocation and restriction, but the difficulty of gaining public recognition of the fact that the vast majority of those evacuated, both citizens and aliens, were fundamentally as loyal as any other segment of America's heterogeneous population. Upon wide public acceptance of this fact the successful resettlement and rehabilitation of the evacuees largely depended. Unless the cloud of doubt under which they moved were dissipated, they might remain indefinitely as wards of the government, an unwanted people. The odds against the attainment of the desired end were large and forbidding. The weight of existing public opinion, the continued pressure of the forces actively opposed to the return of the Japanese to normal life, the preponderance of unfavorable over favorable publicity in the nation's press--all

these things made the problem a difficult one.

It is true that both the War Relocation Authority and the evacuees themselves did make some headway toward a solution, aided measurably by various interested and sympathetic outside groups and individuals. Some 10,000 evacuees in the fall of 1942 volunteered to help save the nation's sugar beet and other crops threatened by the shortage of farm labor, thus gaining a measure of favorable public attention. Several hundred evacuee students were enabled to continue their higher education in various schools throughout the country, keeping that vital, if specialized, channel of contact with the outside world open. And a systematic program of expanding employment possibilities by means of advance scouting and public relations work was instituted by the WRA in different sections of the country. But all these efforts, while bearing hopeful fruit, were neither decisive nor broad enough to make a major breach in the barrier which separated the collective mass of the evacuees from general public acceptance. Something more was needed to turn the trick--something that would clarify the still clouded fundamental issue of the loyalty of the evacuee population.

It was in recognition of this need that the American government early this year took a step which was intended to clear up the matter once and for all. Since shortly after Pearl Harbor, the armed services had been closed to Japanese Americans, and this had served to give added weight to the unfortunate impression created by the evacuation. The fact that the nearly 5,000 Japanese Americans who had been taken previous to the ban were allowed to stay in service was an anomaly which only added further confusion to an already confused situation. But on January 28, 1943, there came an announcement from Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson that the United States Army was being reopened to all loyal Americans of Japanese blood and that as the initial procedure a volunteer combat unit made up entirely of their own group was to be formed. This announcement was followed by the official War Department proclamation, fully explaining the motives behind the action and the steps by which those motives were to be implemented.

Here, at last, was the long-awaited catalyst needed to activate the whole process of returning loyal evacuees to their normal places in American life. For here was the government's own refutation of the widely-held notion that evacuation was somehow related to disloyalty. Here was an affirmation of the government's trust in the loyalty of the majority of those whom it was forced by circumstances to remove from former homes. Here was a token, in terms of positive action, of the government's intention that race should not be a barrier to those who believed in democracy and wished to participate in its privileges and responsibilities. And, as the Proclamation made clear to these people: "Your government would not take these steps unless it intended to go further in restoring you to a normal place in the life of the country, with the privileges and obligations of other American citizens. The invitation to the young men here to volunteer is simply a token of its good faith and further interest."

In the ten relocation centers, hundreds of American citizens of Japanese descent have answered the call. And many who are not citizens have responded, too, feeling that loyalty to this country is not predicated on a technicality of birthplace, but on a sincerity of belief in the democratic principles for which America stands. They are asking the government to take them as well as the citizens.

This little pamphlet is primarily concerned with the story of volunteering in one of the centers--the Central Utah Relocation Project at Topaz. But what is recorded here is undoubtedly also the story of every other center, for a common purpose united all volunteers everywhere--a determination to prove that the government's faith in them and the group they represent is justified. They all realize that their action is the all-important first step necessary to establish, positively and irrefutably, the fact that those of Japanese blood can be and are as good Americans as any other

racial group in this country. They are the vanguard of the thousands of other Japanese Americans who will follow them into the armed forces through the Selective Service. Theirs is the pride of leading the way to the brighter future lying ahead for the Japanese in this country.

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR...

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 1, 1943

My dear Mr. Secretary:

The proposal of the War Department to organize a combat team consisting of loyal American citizens of Japanese descent has my full approval. The new combat team will add to the nearly five thousand loyal Americans of Japanese ancestry who are already serving in the armed forces of our country.

This is a natural and logical step toward the reinstitution of the Selective Service procedures which were temporarily disrupted by the evacuation from the West Coast.

No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to this country and to our creed of liberty and democracy. Every loyal American citizen should be given the opportunity to serve this country wherever his skills will make the greatest contribution--whether it be in the ranks of our armed forces, war production, agriculture, government service or other work essential to the war effort.

I am glad to observe that the War Department, the Navy Department, the War Manpower Commission, the Department of Justice and the War Relocation Authority are collaborating in a program which will assure the opportunity for all loyal Americans, including Americans of Japanese ancestry, to serve their country at a time when the fullest and wisest use of our manpower is all-important to the war effort.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

VOLUNTEERING IN TOPAZ

In the late afternoon of January 28 of this year, the administration teletype office of Utah's War Relocation Project at Topaz received a message from the nation's capital. Over the wires came the statement beginning with the words: "The War Department announced today that plans have been completed for the admission of a substantial number of American citizens of Japanese ancestry to the Army of the United States..."

To Japanese American residents of the project, this was probably the most significant and stirring news to come their way in the nearly six months since their arrival at the camp. They saw in it the beginning of the end to the nation-wide ban that had been placed against Japanese American anlistment a few weeks after Pearl Harbor. They saw in it the opportunity they had been seeking---the opportunity to settle once and for all the question of their loyalty, so long an object of doubt, open and implied.

Within 24 hours after the new development was publicized through the Topaz Times, a number of male citizens turned to the project administration for details of the War Department plan. At that time, little was known other than that a special combat unit of the Army was planned, and that the initial procedure in the formation of the unit would be induction of volunteers from the male citizens residing in the ten WRA centers, the non-evacuation zones, and the Hawaiian Islands.

To permit the evacuees to prepare questions on the matter, the administration, through the Topaz Community Council, sponsored a mass citizens' meeting on the evening preceding the arrival of the Army recruiting team. General interest in the matter was indicated by the overflow crowd of more than 600 men and women attending the assembly. At the conclusion of the meeting, a committee was selected to put the questions raised from the floor into proper form for presentation to the Army team.

The War Department team, headed by Lieutenant William Lee Tracy, arrived on schedule at Topaz on Friday afternoon, February 5. The detail included Technician Fourth Grade William T. Ishida--a Japanese American--and Sergeants Raymond F. Condon and Luke P. Rogers. The representatives immediately went into a series of conferences with the project administration heads to settle the details of their mission.

Concurrently with the publication of President Roosevelt's message approving the War Department plan, an announcement of a special invitational meeting was carried in the project newspaper. This meeting, attended on the evening of February 8 by the Army detail and some 300 representative residents of the project, was intended to give a thorough presentation of the plan. Through a detailed War Department proclamation read by Lieutenant Tracy, it was revealed that the government, seeking a feasible solution to the acute wartime problem of the Japanese American people, had decided to determine, principally by means of questionnaires, the extent of the loyalty held by the evacuees towards the United States.

The proclamation, of which presentations were being made almost simultaneously at all the relocation centers by similar Army teams, disclosed the government's reasons for the evacuation and the steps contemplated in restoring the loyal Americans of Japanese ancestry to their rightful places in American society. The formation of a special combat unit made up entirely of Japanese American volunteers was to be the first of these steps. The proclamation further disclosed that induction through the Selective Service System could be expected as a follow-up step for those loyal citizens who do not volunteer but are of military age and physical fitness.

As to the specific reason for the formation of an all-Japanese American combat team, the proclamation made it clear that the step was not prompted by any motive of racial segregation, but by the fact that a separate fighting unit would be of greater publicity value. On

this point, the statement read: "...if your strength were diffused through the Army of the United States--as had already been done with many other Americans of your blood--relatively little account would be taken of your action. You would be important only as man-power --nothing more. But united, and working together, you would become a symbol of something greater than your individual selves, and the effect would be felt both in the United States and abroad... To the nations abroad, and especially to the peoples of the East, you would provide the measure of solidarity of people who get together in the name of democracy."

The proclamation was read again two nights later before a large indoor gathering of almost 1000 young citizens. At this meeting, questions prepared by the resident committee prior to the Army team's arrival were given voice, along with questions raised from the floor. These queries ranged in variety from requests for further clarification of the separate combat unit plan to inquiries about details of the Army physical requirements.

This was followed by a period of several days, during which the residents were given the time and the opportunity to consider all aspects of the matter and to prepare for the joint War Department and WRA registration to be conducted. On Saturday, February 13, the registration of all evacuees 17 years of age and over officially began. Under the direction of the Army team, resident registrars during the following two-week period completed the 100 per cent registration of the project population affected.

As a loyalty check, the registration demonstrated that the great majority of the Japanese Americans, and many of the aliens also, had retained their loyalty to this country through all the trials and strains of forced evacuation. Particularly significant was the disclosure by Project Director Charles F. Ernst that "over one thousand young men of Topaz registered their loyalty to the United States and are now waiting to be notified of the date to appear before the Selective Service Board." Together with those who volunteered for the special combat unit, they represented the vast majority of those in Topaz who were citizens and of military age.

Those who had chosen to be inducted into the Army as volunteers instead of as draft selectees immediately decided to form a committee to express in terms of concerted action their feeling that "loyalty to country is a voice that must be heard...and that this basic American belief is not a casualty of war." One of the first undertakings of the committee was the publication of a booklet titled "Volunteers for Victory," containing articles bringing out the significance of volunteering. The title caught the imagination of many, and an official organization of all Topaz volunteers was quickly formed under that name.

On the evening of March 9, the day before the official close of the volunteering period, the organization called a special meeting of potential new members. There, many who had already volunteered expressed their conviction that their action was the necessary first step to establish the loyalty of the Japanese American group beyond question. Some spoke as students, others as professional men, as farmers, as family men. As a result of this meeting, many young men on March 10 filed into the Volunteers for Victory headquarters to sign up for immediate induction.

Other activities of the organization since then have included such things as the framing of a credo (reproduced on the cover of this pamphlet), the contacting of other volunteer groups to unite for common action, the undertaking of a public relations and goodwill program, and the preparation of literature presenting the beliefs and aims of those who have volunteered.

The final record of volunteering in Topaz shows that one out of every ten male citizens of military age who have expressed willingness to serve in the armed forces of the United States has volunteered. On the following pages is the complete roster of these men. In the sincerity of their belief in democracy and America, they have all placed themselves without reservation at the immediate service of their country.

ROLL OF HONOR

NAME	AGE	STATUS	HOME TOWN
AKAGI, Takeo William	32	Single	Berkeley, California
AKIYA, Ichiro Karl	33	Married	San Francisco, California
AKIYOSHI, Hisashi Roy	36	Married	Oakland, California
AKIYOSHI, Takamichi	26	Single	Oakland, California
ARIMOTO, Kano Edgar	28	Married	San Francisco, California
ASANO, Paul Sachio	22	Single	San Francisco, California
BABA, Kenjiro	28	Married	San Francisco, California
CHO, Susumu	31	Single	San Francisco, California
EBIHARA, Henry Hiroshi	22	Single	Clovis, New Mexico
HARANO, John Yukiharu	19	Single	Berkeley, California
HIKOYEDA, Tadashi	34	Single	Berkeley, California
HIKOYEDA, Takeo	30	Single	Berkeley, California
HIROTA, Carl Tokuji	33	Married	San Francisco, California
IINO, Edwin Nobuo	20	Single	Oakland, California
IIYAMA, Ernest Satoshi	31	Single	Oakland, California
IKEZOYE, Misturu Francis	22	Single	San Francisco, California
IKI, Robert Shigenori	26	Married	Oakland, California
IMAI, Ted Heiyu	32	Married	San Francisco, California
ISHIDA, Tadami	27	Single	Oakland, California
ISOBE, Masao	24	Single	San Franicsco, California
ITO, Joseph	50	Single	San Francisco, California
IWATAKI, Shigeo John	27	Single	Alameda, California
IZUMI, John	24	Single	Berkeley, California
IZUMI, Ernest	25	Single	San Francisco, California
KAJIWARA, Nobuo	28	Single	Oakland, California
KAGAMI, Ray Teruyo	21	Single	Oakland, California
KAGAMI, Yutaka	17	Single	Oakland, California
KAMIYAMA, Shigenori	23	Single	Yosemite, California
KANAI, Saburo Sam	19	Single	San Francisco, California
KATAYAMA, Taro	29	Married	Salt Lake City, Utah
KATSU, Nobuyoshi	22	Single	Berkeley, California
KAWAGUCHI, Masami Benjamin	26	Single	San Francisco, California
KAWAI, George Rinsei	35	Single	San Francisco, California
KAWAKAMI, Iwao	35	Married	Oakland, California
KAWATA, George Shigeaki	21	Single	Hayward, California
KISHII, Leo Michihiro	18	Single	Berkeley, California
KITAGAKI, Nobuo	25	Single	Oakland, California
KITAGAWA, Saburo Arthur	22	Single	San Francisco, California
KITAMURA, Kozo	31	Single	Oakland, California
KOCHIYAMA, William	21	Single	Oakland, California
KOIZUMI, Yutaka	20	Single	San Francisco, California
MASAOKA, Ben	31	Single	West Los Angeles, California

NAME	AGE	STATUS	HOME TOWN
MATSUKI, Paul Shinji	23	Single	San Francisco, California
MATSUKI, Joe Minoru	22	Single	San Francisco, California
MATSUMOTO, Frank Makoto	24	Single	San Francisco, California
MATSUOKA, Junichi Jay	21	Single	San Francisco, California
MATSUMORI, Keizo Tom	59	Single	San Francisco, California
MISUMI, Tom Takashi	19	Single	Oakland, California
MIZOTE, Henry	19	Single	Oakland, California
MOMII, Rikito Richard	24	Single	San Francisco, California
MORI, Thomas	-	Single	Larkspur, California
MORITA, Walton Masashi	18	Single	Oakland, California
MORIWAKI, Yoshiaki	34	Married	Berkeley, California
NAGATA, Ronald Masao	21	Married	Berkeley, California
NAKAGAKI, Hiromi	27	Single	Berkeley, California
NAKAMURA, Richard Yoshito	31	Single	San Francisco, California
NAKATA, Walter Kenjiro	25	Single	San Francisco, California
NAKAYAMA, Tyler Eitaro	34	Married	Oakland, California
NISHI, Takanori Allen	22	Single	San Francisco, California
NISHIMURA, James Takao	38	Married	Berkeley, California
NISHIMURA, Yoshio	60	Single	San Mateo, California
NISHIZAKI, Jim	19	Single	Los Angeles, California
NOBORI, Teruo	28	Married	Berkeley, California
OBATA, George Kimio	30	Married	Berkeley, California
OGAWA, Tatsuo Jiro	46	Married	Berkeley, California
OGO, William Goro	24	Single	Richmond, California
OGO, Benjamin Yoshiharu	31	Single	Richmond, California
OKINO, Chisumi Curt	20	Single	Los Angeles, California
OKUBO, Seiichi	23	Single	Berkeley, California
OKUSA, Muneo Michael	22	Single	Oakland, California
OTA, Daniel	18	Single	San Francisco, California
OKI, Sadao James	43	Married	Los Angeles, California
SHIMOTORI, George	32	Single	Berkeley, California
SHIMOTORI, Goroge	29	Single	Berkeley, California
SHIOZAWA, Mitsuo	21	Single	Oakland, California
SHIRAKI, George Kiyonobu	32	Married	Oakland, California
SHIRONITTA, Zane Grey	19	Single	San Francisco, California
SUZUKI, Goro	25	Single	Oakland, California
TABATA, Teruo Terry	19	Single	San Mateo, California
TAKAGI, Roy Yoki	40	Married	San Francisco, California
TAKAHASHI, Nobumitsu	25	Single	Berkeley, California
TAKAHASHI, Frank Tadao	20	Single	Oakland, California
TAKAHASHI, George Shiyogo	29	Married	San Mateo, California
TAKAKI, Henry Taketaro	52	Married	Oakland, California
TAKAKI, Yoshitaka	21	Single	San Francisco, California
TAKEI, Akira	28	Married	Oakland, California
TAKIGUCHI, Stephen Masayuki			
TANAKA, George Ernest	41	Married	San Francisco, California
TOBA, Tsutomu Ben	20	Single	San Francisco, California
TOMINAGA, Sam Saburo	24	Single	Berkeley, California
TOMINAGA, Paul Shiro	24	Single	Berkeley, California
TOYOTA, George Jiro	26	Married	Oakland, California

NAME	AGE	STATUS	HOME TOWN
TSUCHIDA, Eiichi	25	Single	Berkeley, California
TSUDA, Robert Roku	27	Married	New York City, New York
TSUKAZAKI, George Masanobu	25	Married	Berkeley, California
TSUTSUI, Guizaburo	39	Single	Kirkland, Washington
UYAMA, Guy	53	Widower	San Francisco, California
WAKAI, Masayoshi	27	Single	Hawaii
YAMADA, Takuzo Joseph	28	Single	San Mateo, California
YAMAGUCHI, George Soichi	21	Single	San Francisco, California
YAMAMOTO, James Masahiko	45	Married	San Francisco, California
YAMAUCHI, Leland Toru	25	Single	Oakland, California
YATABE, Takeshi	35	Married	Redwood City, California
YONEKURA, Minoru	32	Single	Hayward, California
YANO, Hideo	29	Single	Terminus, California
YANO, Masami	25	Single	San Francisco, California
YOSHINO, Joseph Kiyotaka	27	Married	Alameda, California
YOSHINO, John Yutaka	32	Single	Alameda, California
YOSHINO, Paul	19	Single	Alameda, California
YOSHIOKA, George	17	Single	San Francisco, California
YOSHIZAWA, Hajime	25	Single	Oakland, California
YOSHIZAWA, Jiro	23	Single	Oakland, California

WHY THEY VOLUNTEERED.--

The following are typical statements made by various Topaz volunteers during the enlistment period. Taken from letters, from speeches made at volunteer rallies, and from expressions published in the center press, these statements represent the diversified classes of individuals in the volunteer group, from citizens to aliens, from youths to married men.

"I consider myself an educator. I have been doing what little I could to advance the cause of the common man's struggle against tyranny. My volunteering in the armed forces of the United States is merely an extension of my... activities as a humble teacher. I am against the military-fascist dictatorship that rules Japan, Germany and all the other Axis-dominated nations. I am for true democracy everywhere. And I am willing to die for my principle, which is at the same time the principle for which the United Nations are fighting." --Citizen, teacher.

"America is the only country I have ever known. Whatever benefits in life I have received up to now, I have received as an American citizen. Whatever I may make of my life in the future, I want to do so in this country. I could not do this with a clear conscience, nor would I be deserving of the chance, if I shirked now the duty and opportunity I have as a citizen to serve this nation in her fight for survival." --Citizen, newspaperman.

"I hope to find home and security for my family in the United States of America...All my hopes and ambitions are centered around my little daughter--that some day when peace comes again and as she grows up, she will not be subjected to discriminations that the second generation has gone through. For myself, then, just wishing that her life will be smooth is not enough; just taking the future as it comes would not satisfy my conscience that I had done everything possible in consideration of her future.

That when the opportunity and test presented itself, her father took the easier, more passive attitude of letting the future take care of itself. Ladies and gentlemen, I do not care to take that path. God willing, some day I would much rather explain to her the momentous decision made by her father, with the support and comfort of her mother, on the 19th day of February, 1943. "--Citizen, family man.

"I was educated in Japan where I learned the meaning of fascism and where I learned to fight against its oppressive measures. I fought its police dogs and its military lackeys. As I now volunteer to serve in the United States Army, I am thinking not only of defending American democracy against all foes, but also of whatever contribution I may be able to make toward the emancipation of all peoples, including the common people of Japan, from their fascist masters."--Kibei (an American citizen who has spent part of his life in Japan).

"I have always believed in fighting for the freedom and right of the 'common man.' Believing that these principles for which we have been struggling are at stake in this war, and believing that a victory over our enemies abroad will be a victory over our enemies at home, I want to take up arms to help hurry this people's victory and people's peace to follow."--Kibei, civil service employee.

"I believe that it is the desire of every Japanese American today to have his children live as respected citizens in a democratic America, and not as a hated people, destitute of hope, courage and contentment.

"Yet we cannot have this desire realized unless we are willing now--when the War Department offers us the chance to fight for America on the battlefront --to devote the utmost of ourselves to this cause, and not to let the darkness of our present situation or our grievances prevent us from proving our worth in the eyes of the American public."--Citizen, businessman.

"I am a stateless person and am not an American citizen. But I am willing to fight for any government which gives me a gun to fight against fascism. "--Non-citizen, native of Canada.

"Although I am not a citizen of the United States, I have always considered it as my country. My parents brought me over here at a very early age...I received all my education, livelihood and a democratic philosophy of life here--everything I gained, I received from America...When the war came, I felt very bad that the technicality of my birthplace prevented me from joining my friends in our common fight for freedom. My friends and classmates were all going into active theaters of war.

"Now an opportunity to fight for my principles and ideals has been accorded me by the War Department....When the cause of freedom is at stake, we cease to be just individuals. We have to sacrifice all toward that end. I love my family and I hate to leave it, but my love for this country that gave me so much is greater, since it also embraces my family's security."--Alien Japanese.

EXCERPT FROM EDITORIAL IN "VOLUNTEERS FOR VICTORY"

"The United States government is offering us, through Secretary of War Stimson's statement of January 28th last, an opportunity to present the one solid evidence which none can refute--the evidence that we are loyal enough to fight in the U.S. Army, that we are worthy to live, work, fight and die as Americans.

"Only with evidence as strong as this can we...effectively prove to American public opinion how unjustly wrong are the...factions which seek to crush us through proposals calling for the deprivation of our citizenship, mass deportation after the war, Army control of relocation centers and other discriminatory measures."

A LETTER TO WASHINGTON

February 4, 1943

Secretary of War Stimson
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Stimson:

I know you are a very busy man and I hate to bother you like this when you are busy in more important matters.

This is just a simple plea that comes from within my heart, crying for someone to listen.

I was very happy when I read your announcement that Nisei Americans would be given a chance to volunteer for active combat duty. But at the same time I was sad--sad because under your present laws I am an enemy alien. I am a 22-year old boy, American in thought, American in act, as American as any other citizen. I was born in Japan. My parents brought me to America when I was only two years old. Since coming to America as an infant, my whole life was spent in New Mexico. My only friends were Caucasian boys.

At Pearl Harbor, my pal Curly Moppins was killed outright without a chance to fight back when the Japanese planes swooped down in a treacherous attack. And Dickie Harrell and other boys from my home town came back maimed for life. Then more of my classmates volunteered--Bud Henderson, Bob and Jack Aldridge, and many others; they were last heard of as missing in the Philippines. It tears my heart out to think that I could not avenge their deaths.

The law of this country bars me from citizenship--because I an an Oriental--because my skin is yellow. This is not a good law and bad laws could be changed.

But this is not what I want to bring up at this time. As you well know, this is a people's war. The fate of the free people all over the world hangs in the balance. I only ask that I be given a chance to fight to preserve the principles that I have been brought up on and which I will not sacrifice at any cost. Please give me a chance to serve in your armed forces.

In volunteering for active combat duty, my conscience will be clear and I can proudly say to myself that I wasn't sitting around, doing nothing when the fate of the free people was at stake.

Any of my Caucasian friends would vouch for my loyalty and sincerity. Even now some of them may be sleeping an eternal sleep in a lonely grave far away from home, dying for the principles they loved and sincerely believed.

I am not asking for any favors or sympathy. I only ask that I be given a chance--a chance to enlist for active combat duty. How can a democratic nation allow a technicality of birthplace to stand in the way when the nation is fighting...to preserve the rights of free men?

The high governmental officials have ofttimes stated that this is a people's struggle--regardless of race or color. Could it be a people's struggle if you bar a person who sincerely believes in the very principles we are all fighting for from taking part?

I beg you to take my plea and give it your careful consideration.

I have also sent a copy of this same letter to President Roosevelt in hopes that some action will be taken in my case.

Sincerely,

HENRY H. EBIHARA
Topaz, Utah

EDITORS' NOTE:

The writer of this letter felt that the technicality of his being an "enemy alien" should not prevent him from fighting for this country and democracy.

Because of the sincerity of his belief, he was notified by the War Department that "an effort will be made to permit his enlistment."

"VOLUNTEERING IS AFFIRMATION OF LOYALTY"
ENLISTEES WRITE TO STATESMEN

As a part of their campaign to make their action, and the motives underlying that action, better known to the outside world, the Topaz Volunteers for Victory recently sent the following letter to Utah's four members of Congress: Senators Elbert D. Thomas and Abe Murdock, and Representatives Will C. Robinson and Walter Granger. The text of the letter read as follows:

"We, the undersigned, are residents of the War Relocation Project at Topaz, Utah, who have volunteered for the special Japanese American combat unit announced by Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson on January 28 of this year. Although we are not legally constitutents of yours, we felt we might address you as more than strangers, since we do reside in the state you represent in Congress, and since by our volunteering we are making common cause with all good Americans and their government leaders in the prosecution of the present war against this country's enemies. We are, therefore, taking this opportunity to bring to your attention certain facts about ourselves, our motives, our hopes.

"First of all, as to our motives: The most immediate and compelling reason for our volunteering was, of course, that we wanted to demonstrate in the most positive manner possible, our loyalty to this country. Most of us are American citizens by right of birth; a few are non-citizens who have adopted this country as their own. But citizen and non-citizen alike, we are one in our undeviating faith in democratic principles and in America's destiny as the champion of those principles. Our feeling in this matter, we have incorporated into the official Credo of the Volunteers of Topaz, which reads as follows:

> "We believe in democracy and dedicate ourselves to the furtherance of its principles. To uphold these principles, we must destroy every form of tyranny, oppression and violation of human rights. We place our faith in America and base our hope in the future on that faith. Therefore, we believe that our volunteering in the armed forces of this country is a step towards the realization of these ends and a positive manifestation of our loyalty to the United States.

"We have sent copies of this credo to volunteer groups in all the other relocation centers, seeking their adoption of its essential spirit, if not of its precise wording, as a common basis for faith and action.

"The sincerity of our belief in this credo can be gauged, we think, by the fact that we have maintained an unwavering trust in the good faith of this country and her leaders through all the trying period of our evacuation and forced confinement. We have never taken this wholesale removal and detention as an expression of America's real or final intentions toward us. We have always felt that, sooner or later, steps would be taken by the government to remedy the anomaly of our situation. The War Department's action in reopening the armed services to us thus came as a vindication of our faith. Our volunteering is, therefore, no more than an affirmation in terms of positive action of the loyalty we have always held toward this country.

"Such is the prime motivation behind our action. At the same time, we are aware that what we have done involves an issue beyond that of our own loyalty to America. If the government's reopening of the armed forces to us is a heartening token of our reinstatement as equal partners with all other Americans in the fight against our common enemies, we are hopeful that it is also a token of the eventual reinstatement of all loyal persons of our racial minority as useful

and accepted members of the democratic commonwealth of America. For the situation of the thousands of brothers and sisters and parents of the volunteers in the various relocation centers is still a problem to be solved.

"Although, for various valid reasons, they are not within the volunteer group, we feel sure that the vast majority of them are fundamentally as loyal as we are. Thousands of them now stand ready to be taken into the army through the regular channels of the selective service art. But in a time of war, it is all too easy for the superficial kinship of race between them and an enemy nation to create unjust public attitudes toward them. They are looked upon with suspicion; their loyalty is doubted; and they may find it difficult to re-establish themselves as normal components of American society.

"We who have volunteered are deeply conscious that by our action we may in some measure help correct that situation. We are hopeful that any public approbation accorded us as volunteer soldiers will also embrace those of our kin that we leave behind, and that their reentry into general American life will be made easier to that extent. We know, too, that government leaders, no less than we ourselves, are hopeful that this will be the result. For a war against world fascism can be fully effective only if there is a complete consistency in democratic practice here at home.

"We are volunteering, therefore, not only because that is the most direct and most irrefutable demonstration of our own loyalty to this country, but because by our action we feel we are contributing to the eventual fulfillment of American democratic tradition in its best and highest meaning. The America we are fighting for is the America which President Roosevelt has thus defined: 'The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to this country and to our creed of liberty and democracy. Every loyal American citizen should be given the opportunity to serve this country wherever his skills will make the greatest contribution--whether it be in the ranks of our armed forces, war production, agriculture, government service or other work essential to the war effort.'

"We have written to you at some length because we felt that you would be interested in knowing how one group of Japanese American volunteers--a group from your own state--sincerely feels. And since part of our problem, the problem of all those of Japanese blood in this country, is to create a better and wider public awareness of our situation, we also felt that you as a government leader could exercise much favorable influence in bringing that end about. We shall be grateful for anything you might be able to do to make what we have expressed here a matter of wider public and official knowledge, as well as for any effort you might be able to contribute as a member of Congress toward fair and democratic legislation for all minority groups in this country.

"A copy of this letter is being sent to each of the other members of Congress from the state of Utah. We hope that you and your colleagues will give it your favorable attention and consideration.

"Very respectfully yours,

"VOLUNTEERS FOR VICTORY"

THE VOLUNTEER

Were it not better thus to die,
While blood is warm with high endeavor
And mind and heart alike deny
The doubters and the cautious clever,

Than, skeptic, cling to life and know
The years whose gnawing rodent teeth
May eat through craven flesh and show
The bone of vain regret beneath?

--Taro Katayama

WHAT IS SAID

COLLIER'S
March 20, 1943

"It seems beyond dispute to us that this is the right way to handle the matter. We feel confident, too, that these men will become tough and valiant fighters for the country of their parents' adoption...

"We got the old familiar 'That's the stuff!' kick out of this piece of news--a renewal of the conviction that American democracy can do such things...because of its power to attract and hold the loyalty of all manner of people. In opening the Army to the Nisei, we think the War Department did its best single day's work in months."

WILMINGTON NEWS, Delaware
January 30, 1943

"In opening the Army's ranks to enlistment by American-born Japanese, Secretary of War Stimson has taken a wholly justified move. The great majority of this group is thoroughly American in background, thinking and experience. Most of its members are as patriotic and as loyal to this country as young men of German, Irish, Italian and British descent now in American uniform. It is unfair to deprive them of the right to bear arms in their country's defense, which is inherent in every faithful citizen...

"Now that enlistment has been opened to loyal citizens of Japanese extraction it is to be hoped that the government will find a way to restore many of those still penned in concentration camps to useful employment in farming or war industries. It is not only unfair to them, but foolish to keep faithful citizens idle when we need their efforts to help win a war."

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, California
January 30, 1943

"We must concede that the Army is the best judge of the availability for its forces of American citizens of Japanese descent. The Army thinks there are such citizens of unquestioned loyalty and that these not only can be used and ought to be used, but have a right to be so used.

"...The decision of the War Department to treat these like other citizens in the mustering of men for the armed forces will gratify all who have felt that the only proper test in their case is loyalty, not racial origin."

HARTFORD COURANT, Connecticut
February 2, 1943

"The announcement of the Secretary of War that Americans whose ancestry is Japanese but whose loyalty has been demonstrated will be taken into military service is welcome evidence of a further loosening of the harsh restrictions under which these citizens have lived for more than a year...

"The decision of the Army to form units from among the young men in camps ought to speed the whole process of restoring the loyal citizens to normal life. If the Army is sufficiently confident of their loyalty to welcome them into the ranks of the defenders of the country, other agencies and other communities ought to have no hesitancy in accepting them...

"With a shortage of manpower a foremost national problem, no time ought to be wasted in putting the loyal Japanese-Americans where they can do the most good for the country and for themselves. Yet the nation will benefit even more from demonstrating, if after a long delay, its conviction that patriotism and loyalty are not a matter of color but of spirit."

NEW YORK TIMES, New York
January 30, 1943

"...The episode touches one's sympathies. These Japanese are American citizens, just as are the young men of German and Italian descent who are loyal members of our fighting services...Their eagerness now to bear arms in the nation's battle may ameliorate their rather lonesome lot in this country."

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NISEI TROOPS WIN PRAISE

That Americans of Japanese ancestry make top grade soldiers in every way is the testimony of more than one officer who has had experience in commanding them.

A typical comment is that of Brig. Gen. R. Mittelstaedt, now U.S. Army commander of the Maui District in Hawaii. Before going to his Hawaiian post, Gen. Mittelstaedt commanded troops on the mainland in California, and of his experience with Japanese American soldiers there, he says: "Among the men under me were many Americans of Japanese ancestry and I want to say they were among the best soldiers we had. We are proud of them and the record they made. They are very fine, high class soldiers and the type of soldiers who present no disciplinary problems. We were very sorry to lose them when they were sent east." (At the time of evacuation these nisei soldiers were reassigned to posts outside the Western Defense Command.)

Another officer who has praised Japanese American soldiers is Lt. Col. Farrant L. Turner, commander of the 100th Infantry Battalion, which is made up entirely of Japanese Americans and was originally a unit of the Hawaiian National Guard. He says: "I've never had more wholehearted, serious-minded co-operation from any troops."

Still another officer of the 100th Infantry Battalion, with 22 years of experience in the Army, says: "I'd rather have a hundred of these men behind me than a hundred of any others I've ever been with."

Col. E. W. Wilson, who was in command of Hawaii's Schofield Barracks at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack and who is now in this country as liaison officer between the WRA and the Army, has also expressed the opinion that he would rather command the all-Japanese American Army combat team than any other unit.

It is part of the official record, too, that Japanese American soldiers have been performing with considerable merit in various theatres of the war ever since it began. The first prisoner of war taken by the United States, for instance, was captured by a Hawaiian-born Japanese American National Guardsman. This soldier overpowered the operator of a beached Japanese midget submarine whom he encountered on December 7, 1941, while patrolling a Hawaiian beach. Other nisei have fought, and are now fighting, side by side with fellow Americans in the Pacific area from the Philippines to Java. The same is true on the European front, where the Japanese Americans are doing their bit on the sands of North Africa or behind the guns of bombing planes. The U.S. Army's European paper, "The Stars and Stripes," recently featured a front-page picture of a Nebraska-born Japanese American, Sergeant Ben Kuroki, who is a gunner on a Liberator bomber.

Eisenhower of OWI Writes

In a letter to the Pacific Citizen (national Japanese American Citizens League organ), Milton S. Eisenhower, associate OWI Director and brother of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commented on the War Department's reopening of the Army to Japanese Americans as follows:

"Like millions of Americans, I was deeply gratified when our Government reopened the ranks of our Army to loyal Americans of Japanese descent, Those who are eligible for enlistment have an opportunity to make a particularly significant contribution to our common fight for a better world.

"This war will end in absolute triumph for the United Nations. This war must usher in a day of greater decency and brotherhood among all men. In such a war, the participation of men from every land, men of every descent, is the strongest possible force and guarantee for a reborn and strengthened freedom."

This pamphlet is a special publication of the historical committee of the Volunteers for Victory.

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